

- (ii) Actual Users condition has been imposed w.e.f. 29.01.1997.
- (iii) Paper and newsprint have been placed under OGL.
- (iv) Under the new Industrial Policy, newsprint and writing and printing paper units based on minimum 75% pulp derived from bagasse, agro-residues and other non-conventional raw materials have been exempted from compulsory industrial licensing subject to locational policy.
- (v) Customs duty on import of wood pulp for manufacture of newsprint has been abolished.
- (vi) Newsprint is exempted from excise duty.
- (vii) With a view to encourage the indigenous availability of newsprint, paper mills producing newsprint conforming to BIS standards are placed in Schedule-I to the Newsprint Control Order 1962.

Unviable Branches of PSUs.

3283. SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Public Sector Banks have submitted a proposal to the Government for closing down some of the unviable rural and semiurban branches; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) and (b) The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reported that banks are not permitted to close single branches functioning at rural centres. However, at centres where two commercial bank branches are functioning (excluding RRBs) banks may, with mutual consent, take a decision for closing one of the loss making branches. Proposals for such closure duly approved by the concerned District Consultative Committee are to be forwarded to RBI through the concerned State Government. No bank has so far approached RBI for closure of rural branches under this procedure.

As per the extant branch licensing policy, banks can close their branches at Semi-Urban centres without the prior permission of RBI.

Export of Spices

3284. SHRI K. PRADHANI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of countries to which spices are being exported from India at present;

(b) whether West Asian countries are the main markets for Indian spices;

(c) if so, the total quantity of spices exported to those countries during each of the last three years;

(d) whether there is a vast scope to export spices from the country; and

(e) if so, the steps taken to increase the production and export of spices during the Ninth Five Year Plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c) Details of the total exports of spices and the exports to the West Asian countries during the last 3 years are given below:-

Years	Quantity-(In MTs)		Value-(In Rs. lakhs)	
	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value
1993-94	182361	56890.64	29264.77	7409.55
1994-95	157643	60648.33	27284.30	6464.38
1995-96(P)	211515	78589.33	40406.22	11889.67
(P)-Provisional				

(Source: DGCI&S Calcutta/Spices Board)

The country-wise export figures are available in the monthly bulletin/annual numbers of the Foreign Trade Statistics published by the DGCI&S, Calcutta, copies of which are available in the Parliament Library.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) Steps taken to enhance the production of spices include modification of ongoing programmes to introduce cropping systems approach, minimising, inter-regional disparities, emphasis on block/areas with low productivity level, use of organic and soil ameliorants in problem soils, adoption of Integrated Pest Management, providing incentives to farmers for using seeds of location specific high yielding varieties and farm implements, field demonstrations, training of farmers, implementation of special programmes for pepper gardens, production of planting material of released varieties of ginger, turmeric and chillies, establishment and maintainance of demonstration-cum-progeny gardens in North-Eastern States for production of quality planting material, area expansion with high yielding varieties and adoption of soil and water conservation measures.

Apart from the genral trade policy reforms, the steps taken to enhance export of spices are, abolition of cess on export of pepper (except green pepper in brine) to enhance its price competitiveness in the overseas markets; implementation of brand promotion schemes like logo promotion; grant of spice house certificate as a recognition of processor/exporters of quality products; setting up of laboratories for testing of products; technology transfer; process upgradation and product development.